

Protecting Student Athletes from Concussions Act

When a student athlete suffers a concussion, serious repercussions can occur both on the field and in the classroom. Without proper treatment and management, students are at risk of prolonging their recovery and their success in school and in life may suffer.

Research now commonly reports that 300,000 sport-related concussions occur each year. Youth athletes are at greater risk of sports-related concussions than college or professional athletes because their younger brains are more susceptible to injury and female youth athletes are even more susceptible to concussions.

A concussion, unlike a sprain or a broken bone, is not always easily detected. Ninety percent of concussions occur without loss of consciousness. Studies show the prevalence of sport-related concussions is much higher than reported.

Student athletes with information about the symptoms of concussion are more likely to treat and manage their injuries. The Protecting Student Athletes from Concussions Act, would require school districts to implement concussions management plans to ensure students are informed about concussions and given the supports they need to recover.

Specifically, this legislation will:

Increase awareness of concussions signs, symptoms and risks:

- ✓ **Provide student athletes with information about how to prevent and manage concussions** by requiring school districts to develop and implement a standard, community-based plan for concussion safety and management, as well as conduct outreach to parents and students about concussions and the plan.

Improve Concussion Safety and Management for Student Athletes:

- ✓ **Inform student athletes about concussions** by requiring schools to post information about concussions in a way that is publicly visible within the school and on the school website.
- ✓ **Support students' health and recovery** by requiring that a student who is suspected of sustaining a concussion during a school-sponsored athletic activity is removed from participation, prohibited from returning to play that day and evaluated by a health care professional. Parents must also be notified.
- ✓ **Prevent prolonged recovery by requiring schools to provide** supports for students recovering from concussion, and access to special education services for students who are not recovering.

Protecting Student Athletes from Concussions Act

Concussions in student athletes are a growing public health problem that demands immediate attention. More than 140,000 high-school athletes sustain a concussion each year, according to the National Federation of State High School Association, and more than 40 percent of these athletes return to play before they are fully recovered.

Since 2009 states have started implementing legislation guiding return to play procedures for students athletes who have sustained a concussion. As of August 2013, 49 states and the District of Columbia have successfully passed such legislation. Although this legislation represents a great step forward, many of these policies have been highly inconsistent from state to state, risking the quality of care student athletes receive. In addition, the vast majority of states' legislation ignores the problems students face as they return to the classroom. As we address this epidemic, the focus must not be return to play, but return to learn.

Federal legislation would provide a clear framework and establish a minimum set of standards that would unify state legislation and place the focus on academic supports. **Protecting Student Athletes from Concussion Act** is based on three simple principles; educating parents, students and coaches on the danger of concussions, requiring student athletes suspected of injury receive medical attention, and requiring student athletes who have sustained a concussion to attain a written release from a health care provider in order to return to play. Protecting Student Athletes from Concussion Act would ensure that the student is always put before the athlete and that students' safety isn't allowed to slip through the cracks.

State-by-State Review of 'Return to Play' Concussion Laws (as of August 2013)

